

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 374 169

UD 030 032

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TITLE Today's Children. Creating a Future for a Generation in Crisis.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-8129-2208-5
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 393p.
AVAILABLE FROM Time Books, 201 East 50th Street, New York, NY 10022 (\$14).
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; Alcohol Abuse; *At Risk Persons; *Child Development; *Child Health; Child Neglect; Child Rearing; Children; Coping; *Crisis Intervention; *Disadvantaged Youth; Early Experience; Elementary Secondary Education; Inner City; Intervention; Prenatal Care; Prevention; Program Descriptions; Social Change; Social Environment; *Social Problems; Substance Abuse; Violence

ABSTRACT

This book argues that many U.S. children are at risk because of poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, poor health, illiteracy, racial prejudice, and the eruption of unprecedented levels of violence both in inner cities and across the country. It provides a comprehensive overview of the crises young children and adolescents face and the decisions that must be made to protect them. The book begins with an overview of the biological, social, and psychological heritage that is shared among human beings; this is followed by an exploration of the historical role of the family in child raising. It analyzes how changes in the family structure and in social norms, including rising divorce rates, two-career families, illiteracy, violence, and poor nutrition, have resulted in what is described as an inadvertent tidal wave of child neglect. In addition, the book surveys important recent research in child development, with a focus on early childhood and early adolescence, which are the two most critical periods during which appropriate intervention can make a permanent difference in children's lives. It also examines innovative programs that are the most promising directions for improving young lives. Contains more than 350 references and an index. (GLR)

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